

Washington, DC – Last night, the U.S. Senate approved Congressman Rob Wittman's bill (H.R. 3433) to amend the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) by unanimous consent. H.R. 3433 would allow up to 50 percent of the non-federal share of projects in Canada to be paid for by Canadian conservation supporters. In October of 2009, the House of Representatives passed Wittman's bill by voice vote without opposition. This latest action clears the bill to head to President Barack Obama's desk to be signed into law.

Since 1989, the current law has required that each Federal dollar spent on a conservation project be matched by non-federal money. However, due to the irreplaceable nature of the breeding waterfowl habitat in Canada, a decision was made not to require matching funds from Canadian sources. Therefore, projects in Canada have been matched by conservation dollars from the United States.

"The authorization of funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act does not expire until September 30, 2012. We simply cannot wait to make this change because the non-matching share imbalance will continue to grow and must be paid before the authorization expires," stated Wittman.

Under current law, Congress appropriates money each year to be spent on projects to acquire, enhance, protect and restore wetlands in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Over the past 20 years this program has funded over 1,600 projects to conserve more than 20 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands across North America. According to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the North American Wetlands Council has approved conservation projects in Canada worth nearly \$70 million during its current five-year funding cycle which began in 2007. Under law, this means that \$70 million in private matching funds must be provided.

"I'm pleased that both the House and Senate have passed this commonsense legislation, and given the overwhelming interest in protecting wildlife habitats, we shouldn't waste another moment or dime in failure to act on this legislation now that it has been sent to the President for final approval," added Wittman.

Wittman's legislation has been vetted and endorsed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and members of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council which includes: Ducks Unlimited, the National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy.

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.